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Reducing Behavior Problems in the Elementary School Classroom

Jill Constantine

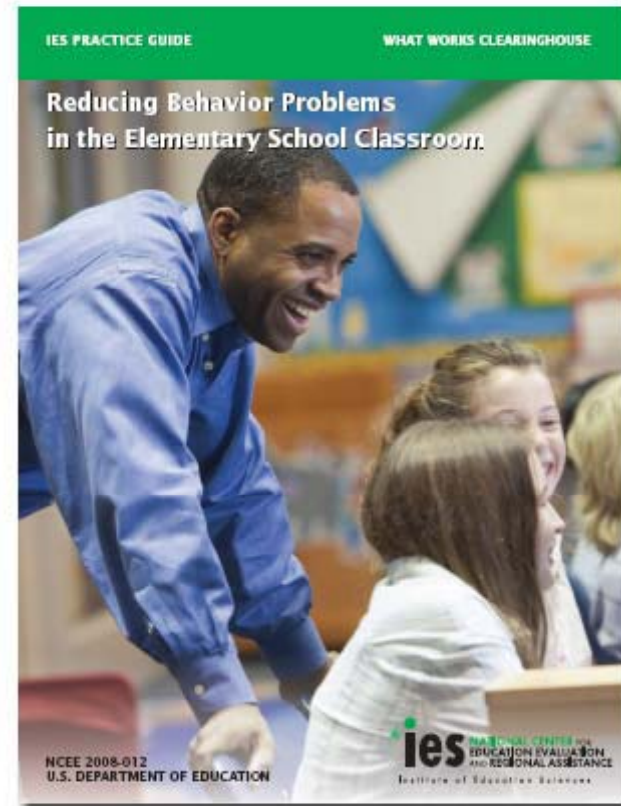
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WWC at a Glance

- Established in 2002 to provide educators, policymakers, researchers, and the public with a central and trusted source of scientific evidence of what works in education
- Sets standards for education research on effectiveness
- Website (whatworks.ed.gov) offers information on education interventions and the quality of research on their effectiveness
- Take the new site tour at ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/help/

Practice Guides

Evidence-based recommendations and strategies for classrooms and schools



Recommendation 2. Modify the classroom learning environment to decrease problem behavior

Many effective classroom interventions to decrease problematic behavior address factors that trigger the behavior. Triggers can result from between the classroom academic demands and strengths, preferences, Teachers can reduce the of inappropriate behavior and reinforcing classroom expectations; rearranging classroom environment learning activities to meet needs; and/or individual instruction to promote of student engagement and on-task behavior.

Level of evidence: **Strong**

Checklist for carrying out the recommendations

Recommendation 1. Identify the specifics of the problem behavior and the conditions that prompt and reinforce it

- ☐ Concretely describe the behavior problem and its effect on learning.
- ☐ Observe and record the frequency and context of the problem behavior.
- ☐ Identify what prompts and reinforces the problem behavior.

Table 2. Recommended level and corresponding level of evidence to support each

Recommendation	Level of evidence
1. Identify the specifics of the problem behavior and the conditions that prompt and reinforce it. Observe and record the frequency and context of the problem behavior. Identify what prompts and reinforces the problem behavior.	Strong
2. Modify the classroom learning environment to decrease problem behavior. Many effective classroom interventions to decrease problematic behavior address factors that trigger the behavior. Triggers can result from between the classroom academic demands and strengths, preferences, Teachers can reduce the of inappropriate behavior and reinforcing classroom expectations; rearranging classroom environment learning activities to meet needs; and/or individual instruction to promote of student engagement and on-task behavior.	Strong
3. Use evidence-based strategies to decrease problem behavior. Effective strategies to decrease problem behavior include: (a) using evidence-based strategies to decrease problem behavior; (b) using evidence-based strategies to decrease problem behavior; (c) using evidence-based strategies to decrease problem behavior; (d) using evidence-based strategies to decrease problem behavior; (e) using evidence-based strategies to decrease problem behavior; (f) using evidence-based strategies to decrease problem behavior; (g) using evidence-based strategies to decrease problem behavior; (h) using evidence-based strategies to decrease problem behavior; (i) using evidence-based strategies to decrease problem behavior; (j) using evidence-based strategies to decrease problem behavior; (k) using evidence-based strategies to decrease problem behavior; (l) using evidence-based strategies to decrease problem behavior; (m) using evidence-based strategies to decrease problem behavior; (n) using evidence-based strategies to decrease problem behavior; (o) using evidence-based strategies to decrease problem behavior; (p) using evidence-based strategies to decrease problem behavior; (q) using evidence-based strategies to decrease problem behavior; (r) using evidence-based strategies to decrease problem behavior; (s) using evidence-based strategies to decrease problem behavior; (t) using evidence-based strategies to decrease problem behavior; (u) using evidence-based strategies to decrease problem behavior; (v) using evidence-based strategies to decrease problem behavior; (w) using evidence-based strategies to decrease problem behavior; (x) using evidence-based strategies to decrease problem behavior; (y) using evidence-based strategies to decrease problem behavior; (z) using evidence-based strategies to decrease problem behavior.	Strong

Practice Guides at a Glance

- Recommend ways to address educational challenges, based on what the strongest research says is effective
- Include recommendations and how-to steps
- Rate the strength of evidence for recommendations
- Suggest solutions for common roadblocks

Levels of Evidence

- ***Strong:*** High confidence (several strong studies in a variety of contexts)
- ***Moderate:*** Some evidence (may not work in all settings)
- ***Low:*** Hasn't been proved with strong research (but panel still thinks it is important)

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Practice guides provide practical recommendations for educators to help them address the everyday challenges they face in their classrooms and schools. Developed by a panel of nationally recognized experts, practice guides consist of actionable recommendations, strategies for overcoming potential roadblocks, and an indication of the strength of evidence supporting each recommendation. IES practice guides are subjected to rigorous external peer review.

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OVERVIEW

Table 2. Recommendations and corresponding level of evidence to support each

Recommendation	Level of evidence
<p>1. <i>Identify the specifics of the problem behavior and the conditions that prompt and reinforce it.</i> Every teacher experiences difficulty at one time or another in trying to remedy an individual student's behavior problem that is not responsive to preventative efforts. Because research suggests that the success of a behavioral intervention hinges on identifying the specific conditions that prompt and reinforce the problem behavior (i.e., the behavior's "antecedents" and "consequences"), we recommend that teachers carefully observe the conditions in which the problem behavior is likely to occur and not occur. Teachers then can use that information to tailor effective and efficient intervention strategies that respond to the needs of the individual student within the classroom context.</p>	Moderate
<p>2. <i>Modify the classroom learning environment to decrease problem behavior.</i> Many effective classroom-focused interventions to decrease stu-</p>	

Reducing Behavior Problems in the Elementary School Classroom

Dr. Mike Epstein



Sponsored by
What Works Clearinghouse
March 3, 2010

Reducing Behavior Problems in the Elementary School Classroom

Focus today
is on results
from this
Practice Guide



Why a Practice Guide on Behavior?

- Gallup poll results
- 20% of children at risk of behavior problems
- Relationship between behavior and academic performance
- Principals (70%) believe teachers ill-prepared to maintain classroom order
- Less than 15% of staff development is devoted to behavior management

Recommendation 1

- Identify specifics of problem behavior & conditions that prompt and reinforce it.
 - Level of Evidence: **Moderate**
 - Implementation Guidelines
 - **Concretely describe** the behavior problem and its effect on learning.
 - **Observe** and **record** frequency and context of the problem behavior.
 - Identify what **prompts** and **reinforces** the problem behavior.



Potential Roadblocks and Solutions

- Cannot collect data and teach at same time
 - Keep it simple, number of behaviors, time, and frequency
- Class has too many problems
 - Focus on one priority behavior
 - Record antecedents and consequences
- I tried and failed
 - Give the interventions time to work
- Behavior travels into my classroom
 - Teachers monitor “trouble spots”
 - Calm and focus students

Recommendation 2

- Modify the classroom learning environment to decrease problem behavior.
 - Level of Evidence: **Strong**
 - Implementation Guidelines
 - Revisit, re-practice, and reinforce **classroom expectations**.
 - **Modify the classroom environment** to encourage instructional momentum.
 - Adapt or vary instructional strategies to **increase opportunities** for academic success and engagement.



Potential Roadblocks and Solutions

- Teachers do not want to disrupt routines
 - Time used to practice new routines will increase quality of instructional time in the end
 - Prepare students well for change; ask students to model new behaviors as reward for appropriate behavior
- Do not have time to rethink classroom
 - Make one change in one setting

Recommendation 3

- Teach and reinforce new skills to increase appropriate behavior and preserve a positive classroom climate.
 - Level of Evidence: **Strong**
 - Implementation Guidelines
 - Identify where the student needs **explicit instruction** for appropriate behavior.
 - Teach skills by providing **examples, practice, and feedback** (McGinnis & Goldstein, 1997).
 - Manage consequences so that reinforcers are provided for appropriate behavior and withheld for inappropriate behavior (Akin-Little et al., 2004; Brophy, 1982).



Potential Roadblocks and Solutions

- Teachers fear extrinsic rewards undermine student motivation (Akin-Little et al., 2004; Cameron et al., 2001)
 - Tie reinforcement to student competence
 - Reward students with behavior-specific praise
- Teaching behavior is beyond my responsibilities
 - Integrate behavior skill building into curriculum

Recommendation 4

- Draw on relationships with colleagues and families for guidance and support.
 - Level of Evidence: **Moderate**
 - Implementation Guidelines
 - **Collaborate** with other **teachers** for continued guidance and support.
 - Build **collaborative** professional partnerships with **school**, district, and **community behavior experts** who can consult with teachers when problems are serious enough to warrant help from outside the classroom. (Martens & DiGennaro, 2007; Hughes, Lloyd, & Buss, 2007).
 - Encourage **parents** and **other family members** to participate as active partners in teaching and reinforcing appropriate behavior.

Potential Roadblocks and Solutions

- Faculty meetings can be a waste of teachers' time
 - Administrators should encourage a culture of professional learning
 - Use time together productively to joint problem-solve
- Behavior consultants expect too much
 - Focus on what is doable
- Parents won't participate
 - Communicate regularly with parents

Recommendation 5

- **Implement schoolwide strategies to reduce negative and foster positive interactions.**
 - Level of Evidence: **Moderate**
 - Implementation Guidelines
 - Address schoolwide behavior issues by involving a school improvement **team**.
 - **Collect information** on the **hot spots** throughout the school, such as the frequency of particular schoolwide behavior problems and when and where they occur.
 - Monitor implementation and outcomes using an efficient method of data collection and allow ample time for the program to work.
 - If warranted, adopt a packaged intervention program that fits well with identified behavior problem(s) and the school context.



Potential Roadblocks and Solutions

- Packaged programs may be too costly
 - Consider evidence-based programs that meet school needs
 - If too costly, encourage school staff to observe patterns of problem behavior to assist in formulating an intervention
- Nothing will work in our school
 - School administrators involved and support effort
 - Secure 80% staff commitment

Principles

- Trusting and supportive **relationships** lay the foundation for positive behavior.
- There is increased need for building **cultural competence** among school communities.
- Collecting **data** is critical in targeting resources and changing strategies to improve behavior.

Reducing Behavior Problems in the Elementary School Classroom

**Harmony Hills Elementary School
Montgomery County Public Schools
Maryland**

Robin Weaver, Principal



Harmony Hills Elementary School

School Profile

Head Start through Grade 5
Urban-Suburban
Home School Model

Demographics

African-American Students	24%
Asian Students	7%
Hispanic Students	63%
White Students	6%
FARMS	85%
Special Education	8%
ESOL	50%

Harmony Hills Elementary School

Title I Schoolwide Program

Title I Funds Used to Support

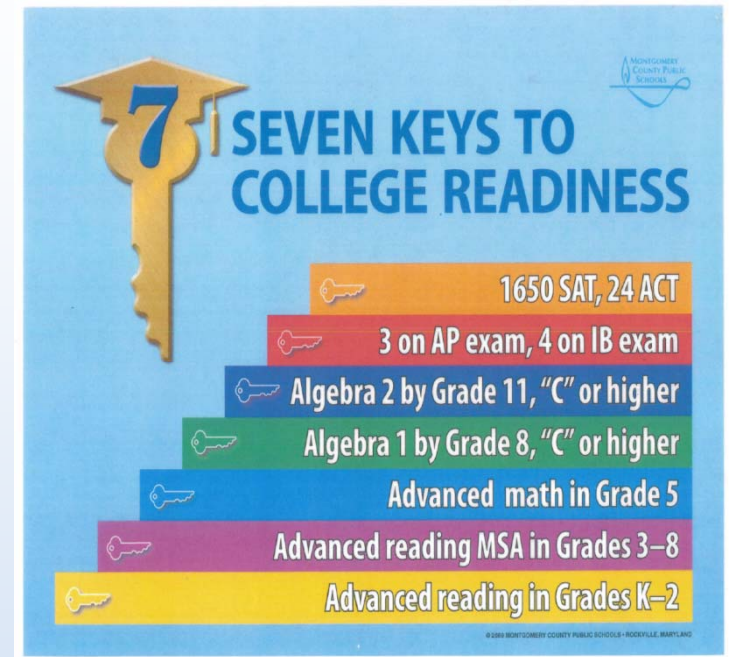
- Teachers and Paraprofessionals
- Team Planning and Professional Development
- Family Learning Opportunities
- Extended Day and Year
- Technology



Harmony Hills Elementary School

High Expectations

- Relationships
- Rigor
- Relevance



Harmony Hills Elementary School

Recruiting, Selecting, and Retaining Staff

- Highly qualified
- Diverse
- Bilingual/bicultural



Connecting to the Practice Guide

Recommendation #1 Identify the problem behavior

- The classroom teacher is the key to students' success.
- Teachers can no longer work in isolation.
- Building teachers' capacity and repertoire includes:
 1. Training on how to describe, observe, and record behavior
 2. Providing the teacher with data collection tools
 3. Connecting the teacher with the student's parent



Connecting to the Practice Guide

Recommendation #2 Modify the classroom environment

Recommendation #3 Teach new skills to increase positive behavior

At Harmony Hills, these two recommendations are fluid with much trial, error and changing. Keys to implementing these recommendations are:

- Anticipate when the behavior will occur
- Be proactive and implement the strategy before the behavior occurs
- Don't give up or give in... stay the course (over time)
- Continue to give the student the 3 Key Messages:
 1. This is hard work.
 2. I know you can do it.
 3. I won't give up on you.



Connecting to the Practice Guide

Recommendation #4 Involve colleagues, families, and outside experts

- Providing TIME for teachers to learn together, look at data, and discuss strategies is key to reducing behavior problems.
- The principal's role here is critical by:



- Setting the tone and expectations
- Carving out the time during the duty day
- Participating, celebrating, and monitoring progress

Connecting to the Practice Guide at Harmony Hills

Time – Professional Learning Communities

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:55-9:20			Grade 4-Reading Mtg. 9:05-10:05		
9:20-10:15	SIT – Various Dates 9:20-3:20 Team Meetings follow SIT	Grade 3-Reading Mtg. 10:10-11:10		Grade 4 Math Mtg. 9:20-10:05	OSET 10:00-10:45 2 nd Friday
10:15-10:45			Paraeducator Prof Dev 10:30-11:30 (2 x per mo.)	Grade 3 Math Mtg. 10:10-10:55	
10:45-11:15	LTL Case Management 11:00-11:45		Grade 5 Mtg. 11:00-12:00	Coaches Mtg. 11:00-11:45 1 st Thurs each month	Grade 5 Math Mtg. 11:00-11:45
11:15-11:45		HS/PreK Reading Mtg 11:25-12:10	HS/PreK Math Mtg 11:25-12:10		
11:45-12:15		Grade 5 CAP Mtg 11:45-12:30 2 nd and 4 th Tuesdays	Grade 4 CAP Mtg 11:45-12:30 2 nd and 4 th Wednesdays		Grade K Math Mtg. 11:45– 12:30
12:15-12:45		Arts Team 12:15-1:15		School CAP Planning Mtg. 12:30-1:00 Weekly	Grade 3 Class Mtg. 12:25-12:45
12:45-1:15				Grade 1 Math Mtg. 1:15-1:55 School CAP/IEP Meetings 1:00-4:20	
1:15-1:45				Grades 2 and 3 CAP Mtg 1:00-1:45 2 nd and 4 th Thursdays	
1:45-2:15	Rdg Spec. Meeting w/Admin 2:00-2:30	MCC Meeting with Admin. 2:00-2:30	SDT Meeting with Admin. 2:00-2:30		Focus Inclusion Coach Meeting w/Admin 2:00-2:30
2:15-2:45					Grade 2 Class Meeting 2:15-2:45
2:45-3:15	ILT Mtgs.* 3:00-4:20	Grade 2-Reading Mtg 3:15-4:15		Grade 2 Math Mtg. 2:45-3:25	Class Meetings Grade 5, 4, 1, Kindergarten (Q2) 3:00-3:25
3:15-4:20	Ext Faculty Meetings 4:00-5:15	Grade 1 CAP Mtg 3:35-4:20 2 nd and 4 th Tuesdays	Grade K-Reading Mtg. 3:15-4:20	Grade K CAP Mtg 3:35-4:20 2 nd and 4 th Tuesdays Grade 1 Reading Mtg. 3:15-4:20	ESOL Mtg. 3:15-4:00

Connecting to the Practice Guide

Recommendation #4 Involve colleagues, families, and outside experts

- **Roadblock**

“Meeting with other teachers will just be a waste of time, like all our faculty meetings.”

- **Maximizing Meeting Time:**

- Setting *Ground Rules*
- Starting and ending on time
- Providing the agenda in advance
- Soliciting and responding to feedback from participants

Connecting to the Practice Guide

Collaborative Action Process or CAP

Classroom Level

- Recommendations 1, 2, and 3
- Remember to include the parent

Grade Level CAP Meetings

- Meet twice a month for 45 minutes each meeting
- Facilitated by general education CAP Coach from the team

School CAP Meetings

- Meet twice a month for a half day
- Facilitated by administrator
- Participants may include psychologist, reading specialist, etc.

Collaborative Action Process

<i>4 Steps</i>	<i>Tasks</i>
<i>Problem Identification</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Prioritize</i> concern(s) • <i>Define</i> problem(s) in observable/measurable terms • <i>Discuss</i> relevant academic & behavioral information • Examine relevant academic history/trends (individual, group, school-wide)
<i>Problem Analysis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use relevant data to <i>confirm</i> the identified problem • <i>Collect/Discuss</i> baseline data • Explore <i>Factors that Influence Student Learning & Behavior</i> (worksheet) • Analyze <i>why</i> the problem is occurring • Explore the relationship between academics & behavioral/attentional issues
<i>Intervention Planning & Implementation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refine <i>baseline</i> summary statement • Identify what changes in the factor areas can be made to support student success • Set specific <i>goals</i> • Design intervention based on analysis, data, & goals • Design data collection system to monitor intervention plan
<i>Monitoring & Evaluation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor intervention plan • Monitor progress • Analyze results • Revise plan as necessary

CAP is a Fluid Process: You May Move Back & Forth Between Steps

Connecting to the Practice Guide

Recommendation #4 Involve colleagues, families, and outside experts



Parents and Families

School District Supports

Montgomery County Partners

Connecting to the Practice Guide

Recommendation #5 Schoolwide Strategies

School-wide strategies are consistent and pervasive.

- Incentive programs (Blue Slips and Character Blocks)
- Classroom meetings and town meetings
- Debugging strategy



Connecting to the Practice Guide

What are our results?

- Adequate Yearly Progress
Met NCLB expectations for the past 6 years
- Suspensions
Reduced from 6 per year to none this year
- Discipline Referrals
Reduced to 1-2 per week during instruction
Continue to have difficulty in lunch and recess
- Special Education Screenings

Please Submit Your Questions to the Panelists

If you have any questions for our panelists, please submit them through the Q&A chat box at the lower right corner of your screen.

If we do not have time for your question today, please email it to pmurray@commworksllc.com and we will try to provide a written response from one of the panelists.

For More Information

What Works Clearinghouse:

www.whatworks.ed.gov

Mathematica Policy Research:

www.mathematica-mpr.com

Harmony Hills Elementary School:

www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/harmonyhillses/